

## US 17 WIDENING PROJECT IN BEAUFORT COUNTY COMPLETED

Beaufort County Council members, State lawmakers and representatives from the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) gathered Thursday afternoon, February 10, 2011, for a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the completion of eight miles of widening improvements for US 17/ACE Basin Parkway between Gardens Corner and Lightsey Plantation.

With a backdrop of protected live oaks and the new US 17 bridge over US 21, SCDOT's former Secretary of Transportation, H. B. "Buck" Limehouse, Jr. praised staff along with the Phillips & Jordan and Davis & Floyd Design Build team for delivering the construction project \$2 million dollars under budget and without any life threatening accidents. "The widening of US 17 more than delivered on its goals to improve safety while preserving community values and protecting the natural and scenic environment of the ACE Basin," said Limehouse.

Beaufort County Chairman, Weston Newton, who worked with Councilmember Gerald Dawson and many of the families that lost loved ones in traffic accidents on the stretch of highway, spoke of the project's importance for northern Beaufort County and its reminder that road projects can be beautiful and safe. "We would not be standing here today without the work of these families, the ACE Basin Task Force, Advocates for Change on Highway 17, Representative Ken Hodges, Representative Robert Brown, Senator Clementa Pinckney, former



Photo: L to R: Senator Clementa Pinckney, Rep. Kenneth Hodges, Beaufort County Councilman Gerald Dawson, former Transportation Secretary Buck Limehouse, Emily Stewart of Advocates for Change on US 17, Beaufort County Council Chairman Weston Newton



Photo: Aerial view of the new Gardens Corner Intersection and roundabout at Highway 17/21 in Beaufort County

Senator Catherine Ceips, former Governor Mark Sanford, Beaufort County Taxpayers, SCDOT and the Federal Highway Administration. "

Prior to its widening, US 17/ACE Basin Parkway, between Gardens Corner and Lightsey Plantation was a two-lane ditch section with narrow to no outside shoulders and miles of marshland on both sides. Continuing into Jacksonboro, this two-lane portion of US 17 was known as the most dangerous road in the state and the nation. Since construction began, there has not been a single fatality on US 17 within this project's construction zone.

The completed roadway, primarily in Beaufort County, is now four lanes with two northbound lanes, two southbound lanes, safer shoulders, high visibility street signage, and enhanced drainage. The improved US 17/ACE Basin Parkway includes approximately three miles of roadway with 100-foot wide natural median and two new bridges south of the Combahee River. Big Estate Road has been re-aligned with Jacob White Road and provided a new traffic signal. To accommodate the increase of left turns within the more populated section of roadway between Big Estate Road and Gardens Corner, there is a new center turning lane and intermittent planted medians minimizing the possibility of head-on collisions. A 10-foot wide multi-purpose pathway has also been added along this stretch of roadway. Reworking the Gardens Corner Interchange enables US 17 thru traffic to cross over US 21, while a new traffic circle connects US 17 southbound traffic with US 21, and rows of preserved oak trees line the US 21 ramps with US 17 northbound.

Clearing and grubbing are underway for the widening of US 17 between Lightsey Plantation and Jacksonboro in Colleton County with an anticipated completion of this segment in the summer of 2013.